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OCTOBER 9, 1996

CONFIDENTIAL

CHINA: DISSIDENTS DETAINED, TRIED [U]

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POLICE YESTERDAY DETAINED DISSIDENT LIU XIAOBO AFTER SEARCHING HIS HOUSE AND CONFISCATING DOCUMENTS, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS. A COURT IN HENAN PROVINCE ON SEPTEMBER 20 SENTENCED GUO HAIFENG TO SEVEN YEARS IN PRISON FOR "HOOLIGANISM." FORMER STUDENT LEADER WANG DAN, UNDER DETENTION FOR NEARLY 18 MONTHS, WILL BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL IN BEIJING NEXT WEEK ON CHARGES OF "COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY DEMAGOGY." [U]

COMMENT: LIU ATTRACTED OFFICIAL IRE ON SEPTEMBER 28 FOR COSIGNING AN "OPEN LETTER" TO THE PRC AND TAIWAN GOVERNMENTS CALLING FOR THE USE OF FORCE TO ASSERT CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE DISPUTED DIAOYUTAI/SENKAKU ISLANDS, QUESTIONING CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY OVER TIBET, AND DEMANDING PRC TALKS WITH THE DALAI LAMA. THE LETTER REPORTEDLY TAUNTED CHINESE LEADERS BY ASKING WHY, IF THEY COULD USE FORCE AGAINST THEIR OWN STUDENTS DURING THE 1989 TIANANMEN CRACKDOWN, THEY DID NOT DARE DO SO AGAINST JAPANESE "MILITARISM." THE FATE OF VETERAN DISSIDENT WANG XIZHE, THE OTHER COSIGNER, IS UNKNOWN; THAT HE LIVES IN GUANGDONG, FAR FROM BEIJING, MAY HAVE TEMPORARILY PROTECTED HIM. [C]

GUO, ARRESTED LAST MAY, IS BEING PUNISHED FOR ASSISTING HIS FRIEND, LIU GANG, IN ESCAPING TO THE UNITED STATES. WHY WANG IS FINALLY BEING BROUGHT TO TRIAL AFTER A LENGTHY, AND APPARENTLY ILLEGAL, DETENTION IS UNCLEAR. THE LEADERSHIP, WHICH HAS JUST CONVENED A CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING FOCUSED ON PARTY CONTROL AND SOCIAL DISCIPLINE, MAY BE USING THE CRACKDOWN TO SHOW ITS TOUGHNESS. [C]

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